

September 12, 1966

Dr. Maurice B. Visscher  
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Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Dear Dr. Visscher:

I very much appreciate your remarks on my column on animals for research.

I need hardly say that we have exactly the same objectives in mind, and if there are any differences they must be in the judgment about the most effective tactics with which to deal with a chronic nuisance. In particular I share your grave fears about the possibility and consequences of detailed supervision from Washington of the use of animals in research, and it is precisely to forestall such an ominous development that I feel it important to disconnect from the irrational onslaughts of the Anti-Vivisectionist community. As long as household pets are in any direct way coupled to this issue, the AV challenge is likely to remain as strident and irrational as it has in the past. I had hoped that by a complete decoupling we might be able to deflate a large measure of the articulate public support that unhappily attaches to the AV attacks at the present time.

Yes, the problem is indeed one of dollars and cents, and if the issue can be brought out in exactly the terms that you indicated there may be more hope of a rational appreciation of the situation.

I can well see your point about the economics of the use of animals in experimental surgery, but I feel that the attrition of support for research inherent in the present vigor of the AV movement is costing us much more than \$200 million per year of federal support. And indeed if it does lead to any more concerted efforts at detailed supervision it will be much more costly still. Furthermore, as time goes on, and in part under the impetus of more comprehensive regulation of the market, the purchase cost of street animals is bound to increase considerably and the production cost of farm-bred animals ought to go down by quite a bit.

Let me summarize by recapitulating that I deeply share your grave concerns about regulation of use of animals and any further remarks that I may have the opportunity to make on the subject will be focussed on this question.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

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P.S. It would certainly be in order if you wish to communicate your concern in the form of a letter to the editor of the Post.

On re-reading your third paragraph I find I am a little puzzled by your economic argument. If dogs purchased from farmers can be marketed for under \$10, why does this not set the going price of a certain category of experimental animal? A farmer who was interested in raising and selling his dogs might be licensed as a certified producer and there might indeed be some provision for more outbred stocks for certain kinds of experimental work.